



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



(left to right) Rosebud Electric Directors Dennis Purvis and Boyt Young and Butte Electric CEO Matt Sleep serve a homemade meal to legislators, state employees and Capitol visitors in South Dakota State Capitol.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

Co-ops at the Capitol

Every Voice Counts
Pages 8-9

**Easements Bring Safety
and Reliability**
Pages 12-13

2026 Rate Adjustment and Meeting Dates



Tim O'Leary
General Manager

As part of its November meeting, the board of directors continued discussions regarding the cooperative's upcoming 2026 rate adjustment and finalized key dates for next year's district and annual meetings. A full meeting summary will be included in next month's newsletter, but the following provides additional detail on these items.

January 1, 2026 Rate Adjustment

The board reviewed updated cost projections at the November meeting and confirmed that a rate adjustment will be required on January 1, 2026. The board will finalize the size of the adjustment during its December 15 budget meeting, where staff will present information on potential adjustments in the 11.5% to 12.5% range.

As part of this discussion, the board is reviewing small changes to the monthly fixed charge, with the remaining portion of the adjustment applied to the energy rate. In addition to these changes, members on demand-billed rates will see an increase in the demand component in line with the adjustment approved by our wholesale power supplier.

Members will receive individualized letters at the end of December outlining the specific changes to their rate schedules and how the adjustment applies to their service.

Cost Drivers

Similar to what was outlined in past newsletter articles, the need for a 2026 rate adjustment reflects a combination of wholesale power cost increases and local cost pressures.

Wholesale Power Costs:

East River Electric Power Cooperative (East River) has approved a 2026 wholesale rate increase. For Lyon-Lincoln Electric, this results in an 11.6% increase, or approximately \$905,000, based on projected power purchases for the coming year.

Local Cost Increases:

Local operating costs are expected to rise by approximately \$400,000 in 2026. These increases reflect:

- continued investment in our distribution system to support long-term reliability and modernization
- higher depreciation and interest costs tied to those investments
- inflationary impacts on materials
- increased insurance and workforce-related costs

Together, these wholesale and local factors determine the amount of revenue needed for the cooperative to maintain safe, reliable service and meet its financial ratios.

2026 Meeting Dates

The board also set the district meeting schedule for 2026. Meetings will begin at 7:00 p.m. on the following dates:

District 1: April 6, 2026
Lyon-Lincoln Headquarters, Tyler

District 2: April 7, 2026
Russell Community Center, Russell

District 3: April 9, 2026
Hendricks Golf Course, Hendricks

Members attending their district meeting will receive updates from staff and participate in director candidate elections.

2026 Nominating Committee

The cooperative is currently seeking members interested in serving on the 2026 Nominating Committee. This committee plays an important role by contacting fellow members to identify individuals willing to run for the cooperative board of directors.

The committee will meet twice in February to consider and nominate director candidates.

Members interested in serving on the committee, or in being considered as a director candidate, are encouraged to contact the cooperative. Staff will ensure your information is forwarded to the appropriate board or committee representatives.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

LYON-LINCOLN ELECTRIC

(ISSN 1540-6989)

Board of Directors

Dale Fier, Taunton – President
Scott Johnson, Tyler – Vice President
Kathleen Schreurs, Tyler – Sec./Treas.
Joel Buyck, Garvin
Jared Dritz, Porter
Galen Grant, Russell
Mary Gunnink, Lake Benton
Mike Longtin, Taunton
James Rokeh, Minneota

Staff and Personnel

Tim O'Leary – General Manager
Lyle Lamote – Line Superintendent
Kristi Jensen – Finance Manager
Brian Jeremiason – Manager of
Marketing & External Relations
Rochelle Borresen – Accountant
Lisa Hauswedell – Billing Clerk
Jessica Gums – Executive Assistant
Wade Thooft – Operations Staff
Assistant
Alan Fischer – Work Order Clerk/Ware
house Coordinator
Ross Birath – Journeyman Linemen
Dan Tutt – Journeyman Linemen
Tyler Blomme – Journeyman Linemen
Tyler Sand – Journeyman Linemen
Nathan Pavek – Journeyman Linemen
Trent Skjefte – Journeyman Linemen
Sam Rohde – Journeyman Linemen

www.llec.coop

Lyon-Lincoln Electric hours are
8:00 AM–4:30 PM Monday thru Friday

LYON-LINCOLN ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is
published monthly by Lyon-Lincoln
Electric Cooperative, 205 W. Hwy. 14,
PO Box 639, Tyler, MN 56178. Electric
co-op members devote 50 cents
from their monthly electric payments
for a subscription. Non-member
subscriptions are available for \$12
annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at
Tyler Post Office, Tyler, MN 56178 and
at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes
to: Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative
Connections, PO Box 639, Tyler, MN
56178; Telephone (507) 247-5505;
Toll Free 1-800-927-6276; Fax (507)
247-5508.

Jessica Gums, Editor

Thinking about running for the Lyon-Lincoln Electric Board?

Hear Are Some Things to Consider

Every year, the cooperative holds District meetings in each of the three director districts. The meetings are held to nominate two individuals from each district to represent the district on the ballot that will be voted on at the cooperative's annual meeting by the entire membership. You will be receiving district meeting notices in March to let you know where your meeting is located. So, if you are interested in being nominated for a director seat, please contact the office and we will give your name to to the Nominating Committee.

To let prospective board members know what commitments and expectations are to be held if they are elected to serve on the cooperative's board of directors, we have provided the following information below. If you would like a more detailed list of director expectations, please contact the Cooperative's office at 1-800-927-6276.

Director Expectations

Work with fellow directors to make honest, consistent, and well-informed decisions in the best interest of the cooperative and its members

Attend regular monthly
board meetings :
4th Monday at LLEC
Headquarters

Attend District Meetings,
the Annual Meeting, and
special meetings as
needed.

Serve as an extension of
the rights &
responsibilities of the
cooperative member

Serve as a key link
between member-owners
and cooperative
management.

Participate in director seminars and outside educational meetings on cooperative finance, electric rates, power supply, and legal issues of concern to rural electric members.

Outside meeting activities may include East River Electric, Minnesota Rural Electric Association, Basin Electric, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, CoBank, Cooperative Network or Midwest Electric Consumers Association.

Tree Trimming Safety

Trees are majestic, beautiful and good for the soul. But we also know that our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes and businesses. South Dakota's electric cooperatives strive to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we all cherish with ensuring reliable electricity. You might not realize it, but there are several benefits to regular tree trimming.

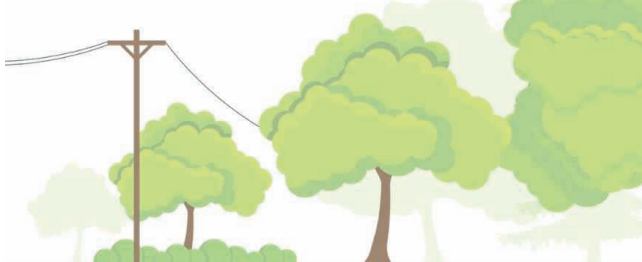
Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. After all, we've seen the whims of Mother Nature during severe weather events with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles. While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages nationally can be attributed to overgrown vegetation.

Overgrown vegetation and trees also pose a risk to power lines. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose grave danger to families. If children can access those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone. Electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor like a tree. A proactive approach also diminishes the chances of fallen branches or trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for line workers to restore power.

If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can be-

BENEFITS OF TREE TRIMMING

- ✓ Improves service reliability
- ✓ Speeds up restoration time
- ✓ Keeps crews & communities safe



come overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone.

When it comes to vegetation management, there are ways you can help too. When planting new trees, make sure they're planted a safe distance from overhead power lines. Medium-height trees (40 ft. or smaller) should be planted at least 25 ft. from power lines. Taller trees (over 40 ft.) should be planted at least 50 ft. from power lines. You can also practice safe planting near pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. from the transformer door and 4 ft. from the sides. If your neighborhood has underground lines, remember to contact 811 before you begin any project that requires digging.

Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch that's dangerously close to overhead lines, please contact your local electric cooperative.

We have deep roots in our community, and we love our beautiful surroundings. It takes a balanced approach, and our vegetation management program is a crucial tool in ensuring service reliability.



"Watch for overhead power lines."

Jacob Ymker, Age 10

Jacob reminds readers to watch out for overhead power lines. Great job, Jacob! Jacob's parents are Mark and Marion Ymker from Armour, S.D.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

Heart-Warming DESSERTS

APPLE BREAD

Ingredients:

1/2 cup brown sugar
1 1/2 tsps. cinnamon
Mix in small dish & set aside.

2 eggs (room temperature)
1/2 cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla
1/2 cup melted butter or
margarine

Mix together in a bowl and add:
1 1/2 cups flour
1 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. baking soda
2 cups chopped apples

Method

Pour 1/2 of the batter into a greased and floured bread pan. Sprinkle 1/2 of the cinnamon and sugar mixture over it. Add remaining batter and top with remaining cinnamon sugar mixture.

Bake at 350° for 45-60 minutes.

Grace Klein
Sioux Valley Energy

PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE DESSERT

Ingredients:

1 cup heavy whipped cream
8 oz. cream cheese, whipped
1/3 cup sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 can pumpkin puree
1 tbsp. pumpkin pie spice
1 tsp. vanilla
1 pkg. cheesecake pudding mix

Method

Beat 1 cup heavy whipped cream and set aside.

In a separate bowl, mix and beat the cream cheese, sugar, brown sugar, pumpkin puree, pumpkin pie spice, vanilla, and cheesecake pudding mix.

Fold the whip cream into this mixture and spread in a graham cracker crust

Refrigerate two hours before serving plus add a spray of whip cream and sprinkle cinnamon on top.

(Optional) add chopped pecans or walnuts.

Susan Forma
Union County Electric

CHERRY COCONUT BARS

Ingredients:

Crust

1 cup flour, sifted
1/2 cup butter
3 tbsps. powdered sugar

Mixture

2 eggs, slightly beaten
1 cup sugar
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/4 cup flour
1/4 tsp. salt
1 tsp. vanilla
3/4 cup chopped nuts
1/2 cup coconut
1/2 cup red maraschino cherries,
quartered

Method

Mix together flour, butter and powdered sugar. Spread in 8" square pan. Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until it is a delicate brown.

In a bowl, mix in the remaining ingredients in the order given: eggs, sugar, baking powder, flour, salt, vanilla, chopped nuts, coconut, maraschino cherries.

Spread this mixture over the crust and bake again for 25-30 minutes. cool and cut into squares.

Barbara Anderson
Lake Region Electric

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

October 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Directors of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative was held on Monday, October 27, 2025. The following directors were present: Scott Johnson, James Rokeh, Jared Dritz, Kathy Schreurs, Mary Gunnink, Joel Buyck, Galen Grant, Mike Longtin and Dale Fier. Also present at said Board Meeting were General Manager, Timothy O'Leary, Finance Manager, Kristi Jensen, and Attorney, Michael W. Cable.

The Board and others in attendance stood and gave the Pledge of Allegiance. President, Dale Fier, then called the meeting to order and conducted routine business including approval of the September 2025 meeting minutes, a review of the check schedule, applications for memberships, and shares to be cancelled.

Finance Manager, Kristi Jensen, reviewed the Financial and Statistical Report for the period ending August 31, 2025. The Board reviewed documentation received from the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation showing an interest payment on Subordinated Certificates and reviewed and approved Lyon-Lincoln's estimated 2025 Capital Credit General Retirement.

The board viewed the September, 2025 Outage and Safety Reports prepared by Lyle Lamote, Line Superintendent. The Board was informed that there was a Safety Meeting held concerning the topic of Distributed Generation Safety which was presented by Shawn Marthaler from MREA. Mr. Marthaler then did a crew visit where the linemen were changing out poles to shorten up long spans in Shelburne Township.

Mr. Lamote indicated that the linemen were working on the following

projects: The linemen finished a 3 phase underground line that was installed near Elkton, SD, worked in map 51 and map 61 replacing rotten poles and continue to do underground work with approximately 15 jobs left for this construction season.

The board viewed a report prepared by Brian Jeremiason, Manager of Marketing and External Relations involving the following topics: advised the Board that there are changes being adopted to the C-MIP Program, indicated that he has been able to get the board minutes online - behind a secure portal that is available to all members through their SmartHub login, and indicated a request for proposal for changing out load management receivers will be going out to 10 different electricians who have indicated an interest in working on the project.

General Manager, Timothy O'Leary, gave his General Manager's Report and was as follows: reviewed the September power bill and sales to members and compared those figures to budgeted amounts and looked at line loss for the system, reminded the Board that the Cold Weather Rules are in effect from October 1st through April 30th, indicated that heating assistance rules have changed and that the changes may effect who qualifies for assistance, reported on the East River MAC Meeting, and reviewed upcoming meetings and notices.

The Board reviewed the Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s Cyber Report for September, 2025 which was prepared by East River Cyber Security Department.

The Board recessed for lunch at 12:03pm and reconvened at 12:40pm. During the lunch recess the Board viewed the East River Electric Power

Cooperative, Inc. Monthly Meeting Report including the Summary for Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Inc.

There was discussion and approval of the December Budget Meeting date to be held on December 15, 2025 at 9:00am.

The Board was advised that it was necessary to appoint a delegate and alternate for CRC voting and a motion was made by Mr. Longtin, seconded by Mr. Dritz, and carried to designate President, Dale Fier, as the delegate and Secretary/Treasurer, Kathy Schreurs, as the alternate to be able to vote electronically for the CRC voting.

The Board reviewed the CoBank Bylaws Amendment and after review a motion was made by Ms. Gunnink, seconded by Ms. Schreurs, and carried to approve the Bylaws Amendment and authorizing President, Dale Fier, to sign the same.

The Board reviewed a Resolution of the Board of Directors Adopting Amendment to 125 Plan and after review of said Resolution a motion was made by Mr. Dritz, seconded by Mr. Longtin, and carried to approve the Resolution of Board of Directors Adopting Amendment to 125 Plan.

There being no further business to come before the Board, President, Dale Fier, adjourned the meeting at 1:15pm.

OUTAGE REPORT: 10 OR MORE CONSUMERS OCTOBER 2025

10/24/25 - 32 consumers were off 2 hours in Ash Lake Township. The cause was an underground fault. Shawn Vanderostyne -1419700.

Do You Rely on Medical Equipment? Let Us Know!

For some members, reliable electricity is more than a convenience—it's a lifeline. If someone in your home relies on electrically powered medical equipment, such as:

- Oxygen concentrators
- Respirators
- Home dialysis machines
- Other life-support or life-saving equipment

Please make sure your cooperative knows. We also ask that you indicate whether the equipment has a battery backup or generator available.

Your electric cooperative keeps a confidential list of members who depend on this equipment for two reasons:

1. Planned outages: When maintenance work requires a scheduled outage, we do our best to notify these members ahead of time.
2. Unplanned outages: During storm-related or emergency outages, our crews use this list to help prioritize restoration efforts.

If you haven't yet shared this information, call us at the office or return your information to: PO Box 639, Tyler, MN 56178. And if circumstances change—such as a member moving, one no longer needing the equipment, or passing away—please let us know so we can keep our records up to date.



WIN MONEY

FIND YOUR NAME & MEMBER #

The tradition of listing member names and numbers in the newsletter continues in the Co-op Connections. If you find your name and member number, call the office and let us know and you will receive a \$20 energy credit.

In last month's Co-op Connections Theresa Bostic and Bob Polejewski were listed and will receive an energy credit if they spotted their names and called the office. Once again, there are two new names and numbers hidden in this issue. Good Luck!

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH

Winter weather can cause your home heating system to work overtime. Check for air leaks and drafts around doors and windows, then seal them with weatherstripping or caulk. Close fireplace dampers when not in use, and consider installing insulating curtains to help keep warm air inside. You can also save energy by lowering your thermostat a few degrees. Even small adjustments like these can reduce heating costs and improve comfort during the coldest months..

Source: energy.gov

YEAR-TO-DATE COMPARISON SEPTEMBER 2025

	September - 2024	September - 2025
Total Revenue	\$8,003,367	\$8,853,912
Cost of Power	\$4,639,443	\$5,146,489
Operating Expenses	\$3,539,598	\$3,761,535
Operating Margins	\$(175,674)	\$(54,112)
KWH's Purchased	69,663,972	73,874,805
KWH's Sold	65,880,530	69,988,417
Members	3,954	3,954
Miles of Line	1,671	1,670
Members per Mile	2.37	2.37



The South Dakota State Capitol
in Pierre, S.D.
Photo by Frank Turner

CO-OPS AT THE CAPITOL EVERY VOICE COUNTS

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Electric cooperatives carry a wide range of responsibilities to the members they serve. Beyond keeping the lights on, co-ops represent their communities, focus on member needs and help strengthen the places they call home. But behind the scenes, cooperatives also stay actively involved in legislative discussions to stay engaged in the decisions that shape how they serve their members.

According to Steve Barnett, general manager of the South Dakota Rural Electric Association, legislative efforts help protect reliable electricity, keep costs manageable and support rural communities across South Dakota.

“While it’s important that we stay involved in the topics that are relevant to our industry, it’s really about sharing our values and telling our story,” Barnett said. “Being involved means being engaged and aware of the challenges and issues coming up in the 2026 Legislative Session,”

In addition to SDREA’s internal

leadership, legislative efforts are supported by the association’s lobbying team in Pierre, led by Darla Pollman Rogers of Riter Rogers LLP. Rogers and her colleague, Ellie Bailey, have been involved with SDREA’s legislative work for more than two decades.

“A key component of this work involves relationship building with legislators to establish trust and credibility,” Rogers said.

Rogers noted that member engagement strengthens the cooperative voice during session and throughout the year. “The grassroots approach is huge for co-ops,” she said. “Hearing from members across the state and from different cooperatives helps strengthen our overall impact.” Rogers added that one of the best ways members can get involved is by getting to know their local legislators or attending Co-op Day at the Capitol to observe the process firsthand.

With the next session approaching, several topics are already drawing the attention of not only electric cooperatives but utilities across the

state. One of the proposals SDREA is following closely is Rep. Kent Roe’s data center bill, identified as Draft HB 31.

“We’re seeing an increase in interest from large data center developers looking to site facilities in cooperative service territory,” said Chris Studer, chief member and public relations officer at East River Electric Power Cooperative, a wholesale power supply cooperative which serves distribution co-ops in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. “We have been providing input on the data center bill to make sure the law would fit within our process and require data centers to invest in generation and transmission infrastructure to serve them, so we can protect our current cooperative consumers from the risk of building generation to serve these large consumers. At the end of the day, we’re not going to put our member-owners at risk, and engaging with lawmakers working on that issue is very important to our cooperative network.”

The association has also been working

with investor-owned utilities on wildfire mitigation legislation, which stands out as another priority for South Dakota cooperatives.

“Wildfire risk is a growing concern, and this proposal gives utilities a clear, consistent way to plan ahead. At its core, this legislation is about preparedness – making sure utilities have a plan and have reviewed it with their governing authority. By strengthening infrastructure, improving vegetation management, and coordinating closely with communities, the framework helps protect public safety while supporting the reliable service South Dakotans depend on,” Black Hills Electric General Manager Walker Witt said.

Cooperative members also have an important role in legislative advocacy. Their engagement helps ensure that rural needs and perspectives reach decision makers. Barnett encouraged members to stay active by reaching out to local lawmakers in their districts and attending local legislative forums and cracker barrels. These are formal town hall style gatherings where legislators answer questions and update the community.

“Members can contact legislators in their respective districts via email or by telephone,” Barnett said. “Attending cracker barrels is also a good way to stay engaged. These opportunities give members a chance to hear updates, ask questions, and share how policy decisions affect their communities.”

Barnett also noted the importance of staying alert during the legislative process, particularly when a bill is significantly amended. He explained that when a bill gets “hog housed,” it means it has been changed so much that the original version is no longer recognizable. “A hog housed bill is changed or amended significantly, to the point where a person may change their position on the bill,” he said. “Tracking these changes is essential to understanding the real impact a proposal may have if it becomes law.”

Barnett said SDREA will continue to represent the interests of both cooperatives and rural communities across the state. At the end of the day, it’s all about providing dependable electricity and keeping the lights on.



Gov. Larry Rhoden takes a picture with members of the electric cooperative network at Co-op Day at the Capitol last February.

Photo by Jocelyn Johnson

STAYING INVOLVED

Co-op Day at the Capitol

Electric cooperatives’ efforts to engage local legislators extend far beyond traditional lobbying. Every February, cooperatives from across the state gather for a light-hearted dinner at the South Dakota State Capitol to break bread with lawmakers, provide attendees industry updates and sit in on legislative committee meetings.

Last year, South Dakota cooperatives continued their time-honored tradition of serving pulled pork sandwiches and cowboy beans prepared by Ken Gillaspie, who formerly served as a director for East River Electric and as board president for Oahe Electric, and Roger Crom, a former loss control manager at SDREA.

The next Co-op Day at the Capitol is scheduled for Feb. 17, 2026.

Legislative Banquets

In addition to Co-op Day at the Capitol, select electric cooperatives across the state host legislative banquets as a means of communicating the latest legislative environment with both their members and local lawmakers. Many times, these events provide a free meal to attendees and include updates on both the successes and challenges for the co-op.

Reach out to your local cooperative to learn more about local Legislative Banquets, Co-op Day at the Capitol or the latest legislative news affecting cooperatives. The co-op network is more than happy to engage.

SCHOLARSHIP Reminder

🕒 Apply Now!

As the due date approaches, we want to remind you that applications are now being accepted for the Basin Electric and Lyon-Lincoln Electric Scholarship Programs!

📋 One Application, Two Scholarships

Fill out just one scholarship application to be considered for both the Basin Electric and Lyon-Lincoln Electric scholarships.

🌐 Apply Online

Find the application at www.llec.coop/scholarships

📅 Other Ways to Apply

Applications are also available from the Lyon-Lincoln Electric office or through your high school guidance counselor.

📅 Deadline:

Friday, February 6, 2026

🏠 Don't Miss Out!

Start your year strong - apply today and earn some free money for your future from your local electric cooperative!

CO-OP NEWS

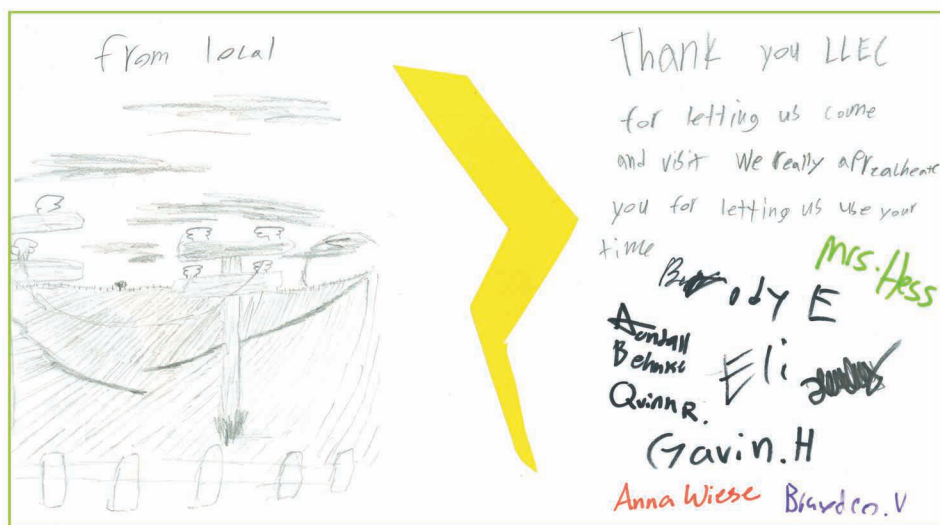
POWERING LEARNING AND COMMUNITY

Lyon-Lincoln Electric in Action

In October, LLEC General Manager, Timothy O'Leary, presented the Lynd Fire Department with a donation to help purchase new communications equipment. The funds were made possible through Operation RoundUp, a program funded by cooperative members who voluntarily round their electric bills up to the next dollar each month. Those small contributions add up to make a big difference - supporting local projects, organizations, and emergency services throughout our communities.



Teacher, Jackie Hess, and her Everything Local class from RTR School visited the cooperative this fall. The Everything Local class visits area businesses to learn about careers, opportunities and services available to students and residents in the area. The students explored how a cooperative is structured, where electricity comes from, and the many career opportunities available in the energy industry. They also got hands-on experience with some of the equipment our linemen use daily to keep power safely flowing across the region.



WORKING TOGETHER TO LOWER DEMAND

Cold Weather = Higher Use- When the temperature drops, our electricity use naturally climbs. We stay indoors more, turn up the heat, flip on more lights, and rely on appliances to keep us comfortable. Heating systems also run longer and more often to maintain indoor warmth.

Add in the fact that most people use power at the same times—early mornings and evenings—and you get a lot of pressure on the electric grid all at once.

How We Keep Power Reliable- Lyon-Lincoln Electric works closely with East River Electric, our generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative partner, to prepare for these seasonal patterns. Together, we plan resources, maintain infrastructure, and ensure that electricity is available when you need it most.

But it's important to remember: Our local system is part of a much larger regional and national grid.

When everyone across the region is using more power at the same time, especially during severe cold snaps, ice storms, or sudden equipment failures, demand can sometimes approach or exceed supply.

In rare cases, the regional grid operator may need to use temporary, controlled outages (rolling blackouts) to protect the grid from widespread failure. If that ever happens, Lyon-Lincoln Electric will keep members informed with timely updates.

Planning Ahead for Reliability- To prevent those situations, we and our G&T partner take steps all year long to keep the system strong:

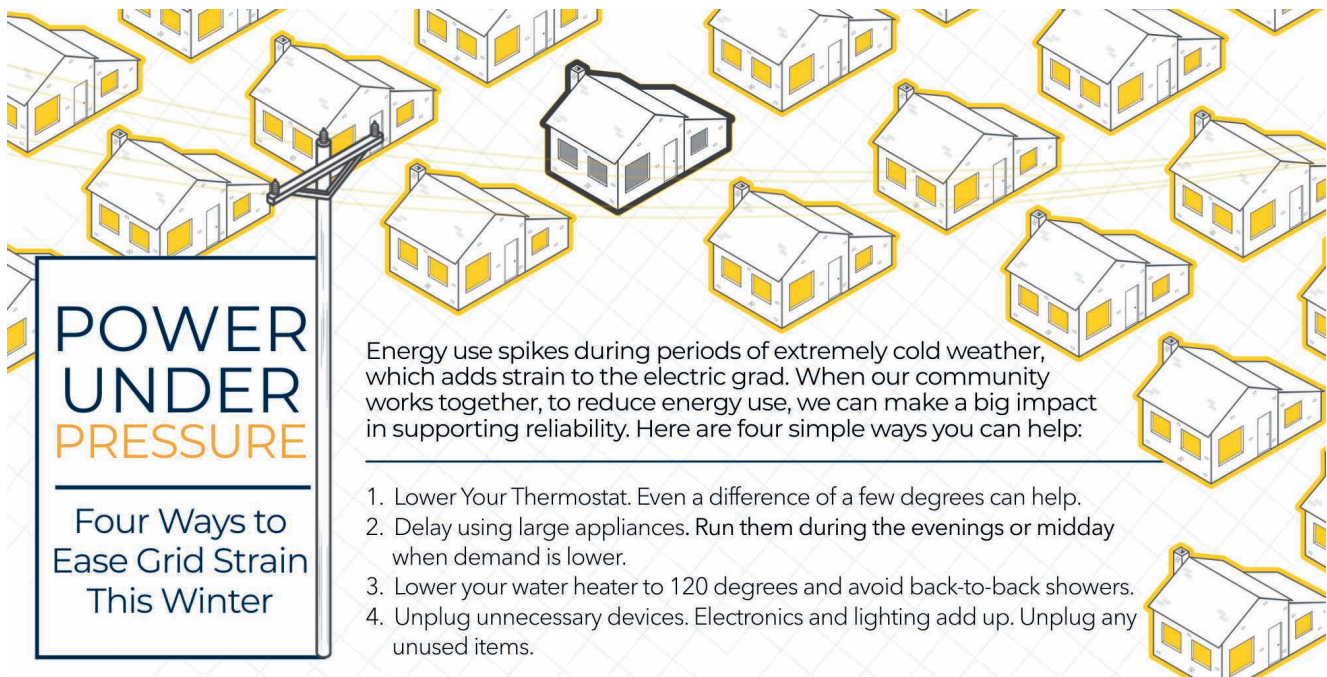
- Regular maintenance and system upgrades
- Investments in modern grid technology
- Detailed disaster and emergency response planning

These actions help make our portion of the grid resilient—even in extreme weather. Still, keeping electricity reliable is a team effort, and every co-op member plays a role.

How You Can Help During Peak Times- You can make a real difference on the coldest days of winter by using energy wisely:

1. Lower your thermostat a few degrees. Small changes can add up to big savings.
2. Shift appliance use away from peak hours (7–10 a.m. and 4–9 p.m.). Run washers, dryers, and dishwashers during midday or late evening.
3. Turn down your water heater to 120°F and try spacing out showers.
4. Unplug what you're not using. Electronics and lights continue to draw power even when they're off

Every Member Makes a Difference- Understanding how cold weather affects electricity demand helps us all protect the system we share. By practicing simple energy-saving habits, you'll not only reduce your bill, but also help keep power reliable for everyone. Dallas Stone - 1472700. Together, through small actions and shared awareness, we can ensure our homes stay warm, our lights stay on, and our community's power stays strong all season long.



POWER UNDER PRESSURE

Four Ways to Ease Grid Strain This Winter

Energy use spikes during periods of extremely cold weather, which adds strain to the electric grid. When our community works together, to reduce energy use, we can make a big impact in supporting reliability. Here are four simple ways you can help:

1. Lower Your Thermostat. Even a difference of a few degrees can help.
2. Delay using large appliances. Run them during the evenings or midday when demand is lower.
3. Lower your water heater to 120 degrees and avoid back-to-back showers.
4. Unplug unnecessary devices. Electronics and lighting add up. Unplug any unused items.



South Dakota law allows electric cooperatives to place poles along public rights-of-way without needing an easement. Shown here, East River Electric's transmission lines north of Pierre are built within the right-of-way. In cases where the rights-of-way are crowded, have obstacles, or are otherwise not suitable for poles or line work, a co-op may seek an easement outside of the right-of-way.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

EASEMENTS BRING SAFETY, RELIABILITY

Why More Room Makes Sense for Co-ops, Line Crews & Members

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Serving rural members means maintaining thousands of miles of power line – and finding the space to safely build and access it. At your local electric cooperative, building, maintaining and repairing thousands of miles of infrastructure is a logistical challenge, but each and every piece of the system has its role in a functioning and reliable electric grid.

That's why easements, or agreements to use and access private land, are essential for co-ops and their members. At East River Electric Power

Cooperative, the generation and transmission co-op serving 25 member distribution systems in South Dakota and Minnesota, Engineering and Planning Services Manager Jon Aus works directly with co-op members to get easements for power lines.

In 2025, most cooperatives prioritize building lines along the public right of way – the area between the road and fence lines along roadways – instead of along quarter lines like they have historically, back when rights-of-way were cluttered with telephone and other overhead lines.

“That’s where we like it from an access and maintenance perspective,”

Aus said of rights-of-way. “Nowadays, when we develop a route for a line, we pick the roads we want to zigzag down to get from Point A to Point B.”

Placing infrastructure along roads improves accessibility for crews and speeds up outage response time, especially when mud or snow are a factor, Aus added. But the trade offs are a workspace limited to the shoulder and ditch and overall limited access to the infrastructure.

That’s where easements make all the difference. When a co-op member allows an easement, the co-op will set poles back just several more feet away from the road right-of-way onto private land, and crews can cross behind the fence when they need to access the poles. The impact on private land is minimal, but it’s a massive benefit for the line crews.

“Having an easement allows crews to work on the backside of the structures,” Aus said. “If you don’t get an easement and you don’t have any access rights, they’re stuck working everything from the ditch and the roadside.”

Engineers are meticulous when mapping routes for new lines, Aus added, noting the lengthy process for engineers as they consider pole placement, obstacles, hazards and community impact.

“At the onset of any project, we’re evaluating the impact of our routing,” Aus continued. “Public impact is right up there on our priorities along with reliability and maintenance. We don’t go down routes we foresee to have challenges with public impact.”

Distribution cooperatives see similar challenges on the ground. In southwest South Dakota, Black Hills Electric Cooperative System Coordinator Jesse Sorensen aims to manage a system that’s not only reliable and affordable, but also built on cooperation with members.

“Very rarely do we have someone reject giving an easement,” he said. “We’ve had very good luck sitting down with members and explaining everything to them that there are hundreds – if not thousands – of landowners that allowed easements so we could get electricity to this property.”

He continued, “The biggest concerns from landowners are about losing their trees or the aesthetic value of their property, and we’ll work with landowners by rerouting lines to prevent cutting prize trees or installing lines in prime views.”

At East River Electric, Aus’ team fields similar questions from landowners, usually concerning specific pole placement and whether poles will interfere with field access, an approach or operation of large machinery. He says it’s usually something the engineers can accommodate because ultimately, co-ops want to leave members’ land as good or better than they found it.

“We’ll even work with landowners to pay to replace any trees we have to remove if we obtain an easement from them,” Aus said.

As the co-op steadily grows and expands its transmission system, East River Electric General Counsel Danny Brown stresses that the co-op relies on voluntary easements, and in its 75-year history has never used eminent domain to obtain an easement.

“Eminent domain is not something we ever want to use,” Brown explained. “We try to educate and work with the property owners the best we can. At the end of the day, an easement is voluntary, and if we can’t make it work from the right of way, we have to start thinking about changing our route.”

But opting for alternate, less-efficient routes is a concession that can severely impact system reliability and leads to a higher price tag for co-op members to pay. Fortunately, Aus and Sorensen said most landowners understand the value of working with their cooperative for themselves and their community.

“There have been several times when landowners have said, ‘Absolutely, bring that line through here,’” Aus recalled. “They want to improve their reliability, or they know that they just need more electricity in that area for whatever they might be doing on their property. Most of the time we’re welcomed with open arms.”

That willingness helps keep cooperative power moving across the countryside.



When a co-op obtains an easement to build a line along a road right-of-way, the line is placed several feet away from the right-of-way border. In this photo, the right of way border is about at the fence line, with the poles placed several feet behind the fence.

On this route, East River Electric has an easement for 30 feet behind the fence line for when line crews need to maintain or repair the line, giving crews more room to work and better access to the structures.

Photo submitted by East River Electric.

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**This authority is to remain in full force and effect until Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative has received written notification from me (or either one of us) of its termination in such time and manner as to afford Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, a reasonable opportunity to act on it.*

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Full Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

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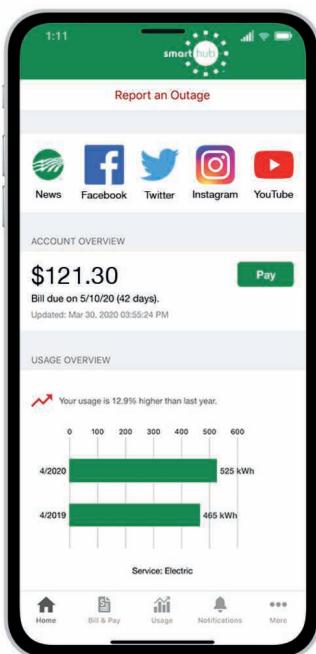
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UNTIL JAN. 6

Garden Glow

5-9 p.m. (Closed Dec. 24-25, Jan. 1)
SDSU McCrory Gardens
Brookings, SD
www.sdstate.edu/mccrory-gardens

Photo Courtesy of Travel South Dakota

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

UNTIL DEC. 26

Christmas at the Capitol

8 a.m.-10 p.m. (Holidays Included)
South Dakota State Capitol
Pierre, SD
605-773-3178
christmasatthecapitol.sd.gov

UNTIL JAN. 5

Winter Wonderland at the Falls

5 p.m.
Falls Park
Sioux Falls, SD

DEC. 20-21, 23-24, 27-28

1880 Train Holiday Express

Hot Chocolate, Santa
Hill City, SD
www.1880train.com
605-574-2222

DEC. 31

American to the Heart New Year's Eve Bash

Doors Open at 5:30 p.m.
American Legion
Sioux Falls, SD
Tickets: 605-336-3470

JAN. 4, FEB. 1

American Legion Post 15 Pancake Breakfast

8:30-12 p.m.
The Alliance
1600 W. Russell St.
Sioux Falls, SD
605-336-3470

JAN. 6-8

Dakota Farm Show

USD Dakota Dome
Vermillion, SD
www.dakotafarmshow.com

JAN. 20

Prohibition & the Pig

Lake Cty. Museum Fundraiser;
Prohibition-Era Bootlegging
6 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
\$60 per ticket
The Office Bar & Grill
Madison, SD
605-256-5308

JAN. 23-24

Pro Snocross Races

Deadwood, SD
605-578-1876

JAN. 27, FEB. 24

American Legion Post 15 Bingo

5 p.m. Social, 6 p.m. Meal,
6:45 p.m. Bingo
Reservation Required for Meal
1600 W. Russell St.
Sioux Falls, SD
605-682-1222

JAN. 28-30

Sioux Falls Farm Show

Sioux Falls Convention Center
Sioux Falls, SD

JAN. 30-FEB. 7

Annual Black Hills Stock Show

Central States Fairgrounds
Rapid City, SD
www.centralstatesfairinc.com

FEB. 1

The Great Lake County Hotdish Competition

11:30-1:30 p.m.
St. Thomas School Gym
Madison, SD
605-256-5308

FEB. 6-7

Brookings Home Show

Dakota Bank Center
Brookings, SD
brookingsregionalbuilders.com

FEB. 7-8

The Black Market/Formerly Benson's Flea Market

Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-6004

FEB. 13-16

12th Annual Frost Fest

Brookings, SD
605-692-7444

FEB. 21-MARCH 1

Sioux Falls Home Show

Sioux Falls Convention Center
Sioux Falls, SD

Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.